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OKANOGAN COUNTY
PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

June 16, 2014

P. O. Box 368
Winthrop, WA 98862

Okanogan County Board of Commissioners
Attn: Perry Huston
123 5th Ave. North, Suite 130
Okanogan, WA 98840

Dear Commissioners:

Thank you for the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed Okanogan Comprehensive Plan. I am concerned there will be no in-depth review of the effects of the adoption of the new plan. The notice of non-significance indicated there were only minor differences between the new plan and the current plan. Since the current plan was adopted in the 1960's (amended by the Methow Review District in the 1970s), it is unclear what formal process to disclose the effects was conducted or what level of analysis was completed. Merely indicating the new plan does not significantly change the effects is not acceptable to meet state laws.

In the executive statement it was stated "After careful review, the Board of Okanogan County Commissioners have adopted this Plan as the best expression of the collective visions in the best interest of the people of Okanogan County." Okanogan County established several "neighborhood groups" to represent specific areas of Okanogan County. These groups met frequently to develop vision statement, goals, and objectives for the specific areas. This was a positive approach to involving the public, i.e. the citizens of Okanogan County. Unfortunately, all of the hard work by these groups was discarded and it appears only a limited amount of the information produced was used to develop the current proposed Plan. This is not "...the best expression of the collective visions in the best interest of the people..."

I strongly support the retention of standards in the current plan for the Methow Review District. Because of the insight of residents in the 1970's to design low density development in the Methow Valley it is unique among small mountain valleys in the West. The density requirements in the existing plan and the acquisition of key land parcels by the state of Washington have maintained the rural character of the Valley, including the important agriculture economy in the Valley.

It is disappointing that the Plan does not address the entire Methow Valley in a consistent manner. The lower Valley, below the Methow Review District, should have similar considerations of low density development. I am concerned that the proposed densities for this portion of the Valley will have serious implications for groundwater resources. With the potential densities proposed, developments, including individual septic systems, present a high risk of contamination of groundwater supplies. Also, there is concern regarding the amount of groundwater available to accommodate the proposed densities. Failure to address and manage the groundwater resources will have negative consequences on future development and agriculture in this area.

In summary, it is important for the County Commissioners to complete an analysis and display the effects to all resources and make an informed decision based on a complete understanding of those effects.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Robert H. Naney